

Top Ten Ways to Keep your Bird Safe from Kitchen Dangers



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Companion avians are extra sensitive to what's going on in the air. Whatever they inhale goes to all parts of their bodies very quickly. This sensitivity, coupled with their small size, makes it especially dangerous for birds to breathe in cooking fumes and eat some of the foods and plants that are commonly found in kitchens. ASPCA experts urge bird parents to heed the following precautions in order to prevent curious beaks from getting caught in dangerous situations.

1. Always keep your pet bird out of the kitchen while cooking.

Many veterinarians urge pet owners to keep their birds in a room other than the kitchen. However, if the kitchen is your family's and your bird's favorite place to flock, always move your pet into another room before cooking.

2. Never pre-heat your cookware on high heat.

If accidentally overheated, Teflon and other non-stick cookware, which contain polytetrafluoroethylene, can emit fumes and particles that may be harmful to birds. The fact is, any type of cookware pre-heated with cooking oils, fats, margarine or butter can harm your bird.

3. Never leave your bird and heated cookware unattended.

Sadly, fatalities can result when birds and cooking pots or pans are left together in the kitchen unattended even for just a few minutes. Cooking fumes from any type of overheated cookware not just non-stick can damage a bird's lungs with alarming speed. And if your bird is out of his cage, he might come too close to the hot burner.

4. Always turn the exhaust fan on or open a window before cooking.

It is important to make sure that your kitchen is properly ventilated. In addition to cooking fumes, birds are highly sensitive to a variety of other fumes, such as aerosol sprays, non-stick sprays, spray starch, perfumes, smoke, self-cleaning ovens and cooking gas.

5. Store toxic items out of your bird's reach.

These include all cleaners, pesticides, mothballs and both prescription and over-the-counter medications. Some cleaning agents may cause mild stomach upset,

but others can cause severe burns to a bird's tongue, mouth and crop.

6. Keep your bird away from food and beverage items that could be dangerous.

These items include:

- a. Avocados
- b. Onions
- c. Garlic
- d. Chocolate in any form
- e. Coffee (grounds, beans, chocolate-covered espresso beans)
- f. Tea
- g. Yeast dough
- h. Salt
- i. Tomato leaves and stems (green parts)
- j. Potato leaves and stems (green parts)
- k. Rhubarb leaves
- l. Cigarettes and other tobacco products
- m. Moldy or spoiled foods
- n. Alcoholic beverages

7. Make sure your bird does not have access to areas where insecticidal foggers or house sprays have been applied.

Since birds are sensitive to inhalant fumes, they typically require longer periods of time away from treated areas. Contact the product's manufacturer for recommendations if the label information is not specific.

8. Protect your bird from the stresses of the kitchen.

These include rapid changes in temperature and high traffic flow. Each time you cook, the temperature of the kitchen increases and then returns to normal. The repeated change in temperature could cause discomfort to your bird. The flow of people into and out of the kitchen is often high compared to other rooms in the house. This high traffic flow can cause stress which could lead to behavior problems in some birds.

9. Keep your bird away from kitchen appliances.

If a bird is allowed to fly free or accidentally escapes, the following kitchen appliances can prove hazardous:

- a. Ceiling fans
- b. Hot burners on stovetops
- c. Open ovens
- d. Toasters
- e. Coffee pots
- f. Tea kettles
- g. Boiling water
- h. Hot cooking oil

Keep in mind that grease, butter, margarine and oils can get onto your bird's feathers, matting them and possibly exposing skin. This can cause a sudden change to your bird's body temperature,

leaving them wide open to a chill. Birds can also get cuts from sharp objects and could potentially drown in a sink or even a small bowl of water.

10. Keep your bird away from potentially toxic kitchen plants.

Some of these include:

- a. Aloe (Aloe vera)
- b. Avocados
- c. Boston ivy (Parthenocissus tricuspidata)
- d. Cyclamen species
- e. Dieffenbachia species
- f. English ivy (Hedera helix)
- g. Ficus species
- h. Kalanchoe species
- i. Madagascar dragon tree (Dracaena marginata)
- j. Philodendron species
- k. Pothos or devil's ivy (Epipremnum aureus)
- l. Schefflera species
- m. Snake plant (Sansevieria trifasciata)
- n. Tomato leaves and stems (green parts)
- o. Potato leaves and stems (green parts)
- p. Rhubarb leaves

For a further list, check out our [toxic plant](#) pages. Much of the information there is pertinent for birds, as well as dogs, cats and horses.

Remember, if you think your bird has ingested or come in contact with a potentially toxic substance, call your veterinarian or the ASPCA. To reach the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, call (888) 426-4435. For more information, visit the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center online.

Tips on cooking safety were provided by Karen Rosenthal, DVM, MS.

Extra Tips

The following items can also be toxic to your bird: Hairsprays, perfumes, insecticidal fumigants, pesticide sprays, automobile exhausts and fumes from glue and paint.

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